

Exhibit 67

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More EV problems: This time Chrysler Pacifica under recall investigation after fires

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USA TODAY

Published 5:58 a.m. ET Jan. 24, 2024 | Updated 12:14 p.m. ET Jan. 31, 2024

Chris Hawkins' 9-year-old son smelled burning plastic somewhere in the house.

"It kind of hit you in the face" as soon as you walked in the garage, Hawkins said of "the intense and pungent burning plastic smell."

That smell in his Chesterfield, Missouri, garage turned to smoke, and within minutes – after firefighters arrived on the scene – the family's 2018 Chrysler Pacifica plug-in hybrid electric van, which was off and plugged in while charging, would be on fire.

The Nov. 5 blaze totaled the vehicle and caused extensive damage to their garage. There were no injuries, but fire officials told the family they were fortunate to have called 911 as soon as they saw smoke, which led to firefighters being on scene to hose the van down when the first of three fireballs burst out of the vehicle.

This was less than two months after Chris and Ellie Hawkins had the vehicle serviced for a recall linked to a risk of fire.

'Someone else is sleeping soundly at night, but it could happen to them'

The couple is now questioning the effectiveness of the fix on their vehicle, and they are worried that the same thing could happen to other unsuspecting Pacifica plug-in owners.

“We got it fixed. That’s what really made us feel like we should reach out to NHTSA and others,” Chris Hawkins told USA TODAY. “I’m sure there’s someone else out there that had this recall done and is sleeping soundly at night, but it could happen to them.”

What was the 2017 and 2018 Pacifica PHEV recall?

The recall by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, now part of Stellantis, was for 2017 and 2018 Pacifica Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) produced between Aug. 12, 2016, and Aug. 7, 2018. The recall addressed fires that may originate in the high-voltage battery pack assembly while the vehicle is off and plugged in.

The fire “can result in an increased risk of occupant injury, injury to persons outside the vehicle, and property damage,” according to the notice from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Other vehicle owners also had Pacifica hybrid fires

Hawkins and his wife are not alone in wanting to make sure another family doesn’t have a similar experience.

Last week, NHTSA opened an investigation into the remedy effectiveness of recall 22V-077.

A spokeswoman for NHTSA said the government agency generally does not comment on open investigations, but she provided a link to the public document outlining the inquiry, which was opened on Jan. 16.

The NHTSA investigation document detailed the current recall, which said “a software remedy designed to improve thermal event detectability by monitoring battery diagnostics is currently being installed on subject vehicles as an interim remedy. As of November 23, 2023, the root cause of the battery failure is unknown.”

The investigation was prompted by four consumer complaints, including one from the Hawkins family, according to the document. The complaints range from December 2022 through December 2023 and allege vehicle thermal events involving recalled 2017 and 2018 Chrysler Pacifica PHEVs.

Two of the four reports indicated the vehicle had been repaired for the fire-risk recall; the other two reports do not indicate whether the recall work was done.

The four complaints in the investigation report, from Missouri, Illinois, California and an unknown location all have the same story: the consumer’s plug-in vehicle caught fire while off and plugged in the garage. Three of the vehicles were declared totaled and there was extensive damage to the garage.

A fourth vehicle’s lithium battery caught fire to the point of smoking and the owner said the fire could have burned the house down if the fire department had not arrived. No injuries were reported, but all four consumers reported no warning signs and were thankful their houses didn’t burn down. Consumers have also complained of smoke-related consequences.

One complaint from a car owner in an unknown location said the vehicle had just been repaired a week prior. The hybrid was parked in the garage, plugged in, but done charging.

“In the middle of the night, the battery spontaneously combusted. We heard a loud boom sound and found the car smoldering and emitting significant amounts of smoke. The car then burst into flames,” the complaint said.

The fire department soaked the vehicle with water, the complaint continued, “but it continued to reignite for approximately two hours despite the fire department’s best efforts.”

A Stellantis spokesman said “in accordance with our standard practice, we are providing our full cooperation” for the NHTSA investigation.

What happened at the Hawkins' house?

The Hawkins' habit was to plug their electric vehicle in for charging in the morning after they took their three dogs on a walk instead of charging it overnight.

On Nov. 5, Ellie Hawkins left the house early in the morning to go to an open house for the preschool where she is a teacher. About 3½ hours later, Chris Hawkins, a finance/operations executive, said he smelled burning plastic in the house.

Initially, he wasn't too worried. “We've got three little kids, and maybe somebody ran over the vacuum cord,” he thought to himself.

Hawkins and the children, ages 5, 7, and 9, walked around the house but couldn't find the source of the smell. He also texted his wife to ask if she had smelled anything weird when she left. She hadn't.

As Hawkins and the kids prepared to drive to the zoo, the couple's 9-year-old walked out to the garage. He called back to his dad.

There was a strong burning plastic smell and Hawkins' son pointed to what he thought was gas under the car. Hawkins said it was a pink liquid that had trickled

from somewhere under the van and formed a puddle that stretched toward the driveway.

The charging station is connected to the car on the driver's side. When Hawkins went to unplug the vehicle, he saw the dashboard "lit up" with all kinds of lights he had never seen before.

He rushed the kids inside and told them they weren't going to the zoo.

A few minutes later, Hawkins went back out to the garage. He saw plumes of smoke coming out of his van.

Family gets safely outside

Hawkins got the kids and two of the family's three dogs out of the house through a back door and called 911. They went to their backyard, where Hawkins started taking photos and videos of the garage, located on the side of their house.

As the firefighters from the Metro West Fire Protection District were dousing the car with water and foam, Hawkins said a "big fireball shoots out of the back" of the vehicle's back hatch, which had been opened.

"At that point, they really kicked it into high gear," he said of the firefighters. More fire trucks began arriving on the scene.

And firefighters told the family to move further away from the house.

"I remember it clear as day, the fire chief said 'we're preparing for your house to go up'" because the garage had effectively turned into an oven, Hawkins said.

But the house didn't catch on fire. A firefighter later told Hawkins, after the van blaze was fully extinguished that the only reason the house didn't burn down was

because he had called 911 and they were actively spraying the van when the first explosion happened.

Neighbors said two more fireballs came out of the vehicle while Hawkins was briefly allowed back in the house to retrieve the family's third dog. Finally, a tow truck had to come and pull the van out and turn it on its side.

Firefighters cleared the scene two hours and 13 minutes after first arriving, according to the incident report.

In a statement provided to USA TODAY, Metro West Fire Protection District Capt. Matt Coppin said: "The homeowner's immediate decision to call 911 upon detecting the odor of smoke prevented possible injury to the occupants and substantial damage to the home."

Aftermath of the fire

Hawkins filed a complaint with NHTSA on Nov. 14 and heard back from an investigator three days later. On the advice of the NHTSA investigator, he called a Chrysler customer service number on Nov. 21 and was told the incident was going to be escalated to the company's special investigations team.

On Thanksgiving, Hawkins got a call back from a Chrysler representative who left a message asking where the vehicle was located. Hawkins called back the next day and said he was unaware of the van's exact location since it was under the insurance company's control while the claim was being handled. That was the last call he had from Chrysler.

Hawkins also went to the dealership where he had the vehicle serviced. An employee said he was sorry about the experience but added it was a corporate matter.

Meanwhile, Hawkins says his kids are traumatized, having seen "the car they ride in everyday blow up." He's consulted with several attorneys, who've said even though his family has lost money due to insurance deductibles, and the need to rent and ultimately buy a new car, no one was injured so there is no case.

He believes Chrysler has ignored the family.

"We felt that we did what we needed to do," said Hawkins. "I would have felt differently had this happened before we had this recall addressed. All they've really done at this point is ignore us and I think that's just crazy."

A Stellantis spokesman said in an email to USA TODAY "with regard to this particular customer, we are trying to arrange an inspection of this vehicle. Until such an inspection is complete, it is inappropriate to engage in speculation. Fires are highly complex events with multiple potential causes."

What happens now?

According to the latest quarterly report from NHTSA based on data provided by the automaker, 16,741 Pacifica vehicles had been recalled for the initial fire risk as of Oct. 30, 2023. The report added that 11,857 vehicles had been serviced.

However, according to the investigation report from NHTSA, "the Office of Defects Investigation is opening this Recall Query to review the effectiveness of the original recall remedy, understand the root cause of the battery fires, investigate additional reports of Pacifica PHEV HV battery fires, and to increase monitoring of the manufacturer root cause investigation."

Are electric vehicles a fire hazard?

In the past, when there have been reports of vehicles on fire on the side of the road, they've typically involved an older car that has sprung a leak and oil or gasoline has caught on fire, said Greg Less, director of the Battery Lab at the University of Michigan's Electric Vehicle Center.

"What's different about electric vehicles is new electric vehicles are catching fire without there being a crash or some sort of road debris penetrating the battery pack, or in this case, it is in someone's garage and catches on fire," Less told USA TODAY. "So in that sense, fires are more prevalent in new electric vehicles than in new gasoline cars."

Less was not aware of Pacifica Electric Vehicle Hybrids specifically catching fire. But when such incidents happen to electric vehicles, there could be a variety of reasons, he said.

For instance, batteries store energy and when a stored energy has extra heat added to it, a reaction can occur to generate more heat and potentially cause a fire or explosion, he said.

He likened a battery to a full water balloon. If you keep adding more water to it, it's going to pop. "For whatever reason, some computer chip failed or whatever kept pushing more electricity into that battery. That would be bad, and it would cause bad things to happen," he said.

How can you protect yourself from an electrical vehicle fire?

Though electric fires are relatively uncommon, there have been reports of other manufacturers' electric vehicles catching fire, such as several incidents involving Teslas and in the spring of 2023, several F-150 electric vehicle truck batteries caught on fire in the holding lot of a Michigan plant.

When there is an incident, each fire helps researchers learn to fix the issue, so it won't happen again, Less said.

"People should not abandon their electric vehicles because of this," Less said. Get the vehicle checked out and make sure it is fine, but "they're a great mode of transportation."

Other EV fires: Tesla 'spontaneously' catches fire on California highway; 6,000 gallons of water needed to put it out

Less has an electric vehicle and believes in them, he said.

Still, Less's charger is outside of the garage at the end of the driveway to prevent any damage to his house if something were to go wrong.

It's also good to have a smoke detector, though there may already be a problem by the time it goes off, Less said. A carbon monoxide detector near the electric vehicle might give an early warning sign, since carbon monoxide is one of the gases that would be emitted if a battery cell starts to burn, he said.

If you find your electric vehicle is smoking, Less said, do not attempt to roll it out of the garage or start the car to move it.

"Those giant fireballs are no joke," he said. "The No. 1 thing for consumers is to keep in mind their health and safety is more important than the vehicle or the house."

If everything is working properly, similar to how a cell phone stops charging when it is fully charged, an electric vehicle should do the same, he said.

Family would consider another plug-in in the future

The out-of-pocket costs for the Hawkins family have been a hit, Hawkins said, especially since these were expenses they were not expecting and the Pacifica was paid off. Their home and auto deductibles are \$5,000 and their insurance only provided a rental car for 30 days, so they had to spend \$75 a day, totaling more than \$2,000. Hawkins also estimates he's spent 100 hours dealing with insurance and paperwork related to the fire and NHTSA complaint.

They also had to take out an 8% loan to buy a new minivan, which cost approximately \$40,000 – twice the amount insurance paid them for their burned-out Pacifica.

The Hawkins family decided not to get another plug-in hybrid; they bought a new Toyota Sienna, which has a gas tank and battery that is powered by the vehicle.

The family would consider another eco-friendly plug-in in the future, “once the track record for safety showed consistent improvement,” Hawkins said.

But until then, they want Pacifica owners whose vehicles have been recalled and serviced to be careful.

“If you have a 2018 Pacifica hybrid, have someone take a look at it again and make sure it was fixed right,” he said. “If this saves one life, I will be happy.”

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